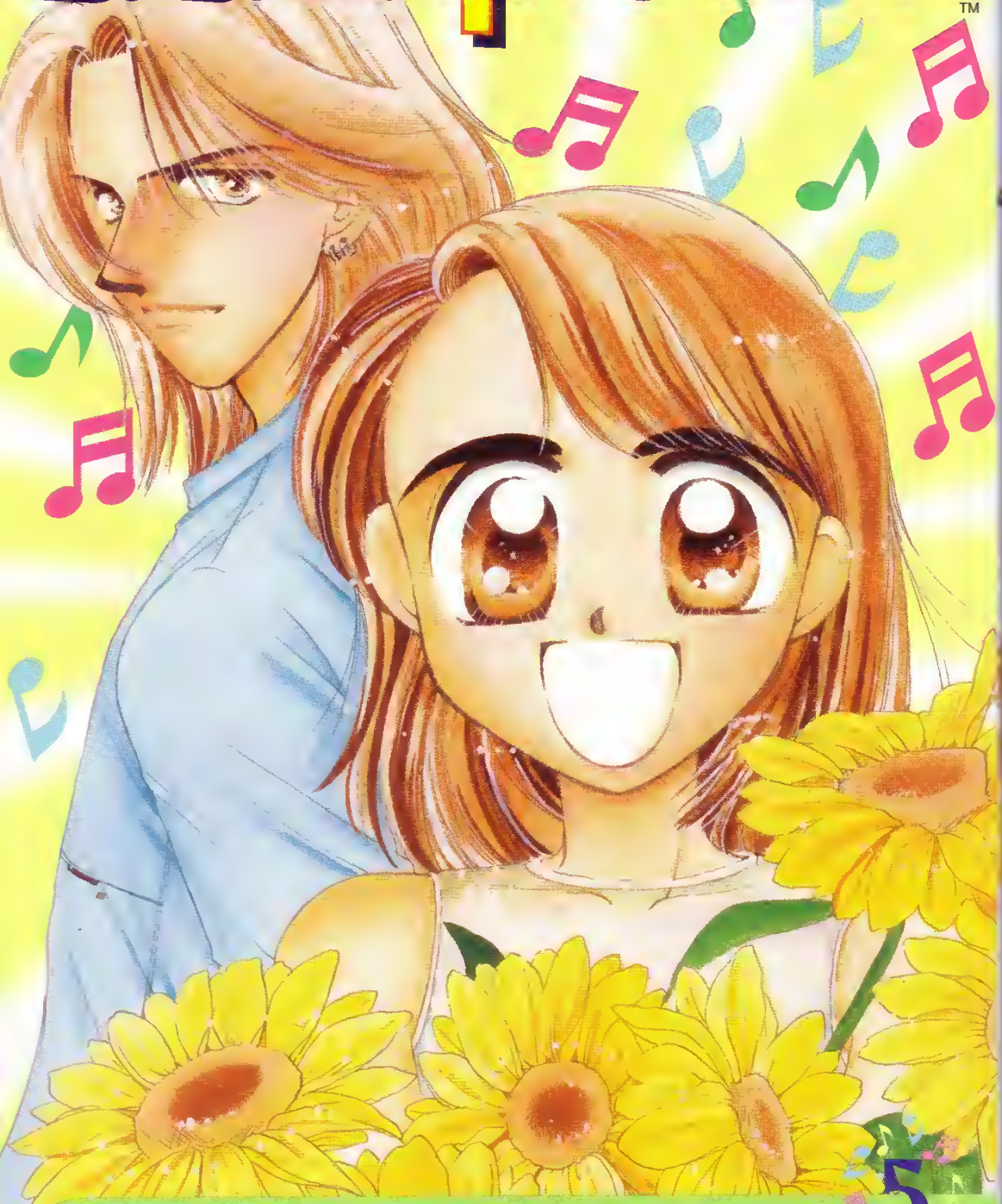
shôjo

B.B. Explosion™



STORY AND ART BY Yasue Imai

5

VIZ Graphic Novel

B.B. Explosion™

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Story and Art by

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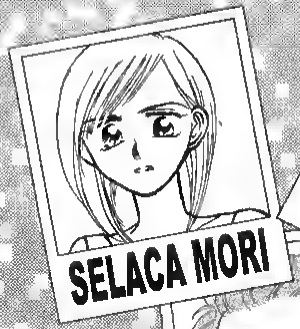
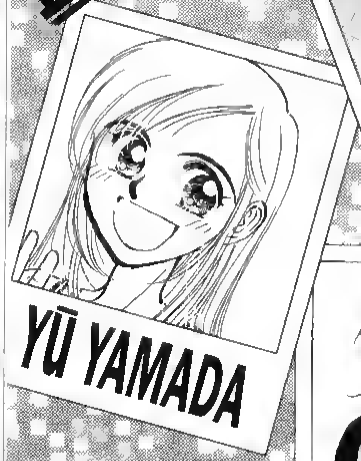
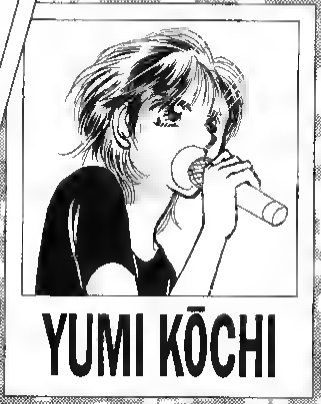


SYNOPSIS

SO MANY YOUNG OKINAWA GIRLS DREAM OF ATTENDING THE OKINAWA ACTORS SCHOOL, AND AIRI IS LIVING THAT DREAM!! EVERYDAY SHE WORKED HARD AT HER LESSONS ALONG WITH HER FRIENDS, YŪ AND YUMI, AND GOT TO JOIN THE TEEN GROUP, B B. WAVES
ONE DAY, AFTER SINGING A SOLO AT AN ACTORS SCHOOL CONCERT, AIRI IS PICKED UP BY THE FAMOUS PRODUCER MS TAKAYA AND IS SET TO BEGIN LESSONS IN TOKYO.
ALTHOUGH SHE STUMBLES MANY TIMES, AIRI'S DEBUT SINGLE GOES TO NUMBER 1 ON THE CHARTS AND SHE IS NOMINATED FOR THE MUSIC AWARD SHOW'S GRAND PRIZE!! HER RIVAL IS THE TOP POP PRINCESS SELACA. HOWEVER, SELACA LOSES CONTROL AFTER HER MOTHER PASSES AWAY, AND HER POPULARITY PLUMMETS. AIRI WORRIES FOR SELACA BUT...?!

B.B. EXPLOSION 5





B.B. Explosion
.....7

B.B. Explosion Extra Manga:
Dance With You
.....71

B.B. Explosion Extra Manga:
Real Heart Dream
.....121

From a Near Miss, Love
.....155

B.B. Explosion
Vol. 5
Shôjo Edition

Story and Art by Yasue Imai

English Adaptation/Trina Robbins
Translation/Kaori Inoue
Touch-up & Lettering/Kalh Reed
Cover & Graphic Design/Hidemi Sahara
Editor/Eric Searleman

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Editorial Director/Alvin Lu
Sr. Director of Acquisitions/Rika Inouye
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Publisher/Seiji Horibuchi

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Printed in the U.S.A.

Published by VIZ, LLC
P.O. Box 77010
San Francisco, CA 94107

Shôjo Edition
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
First printing, March 2005

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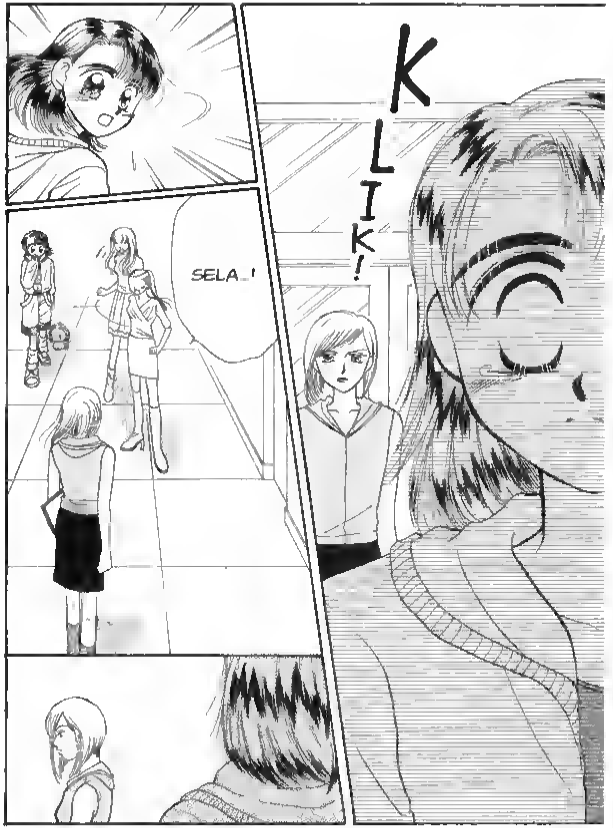
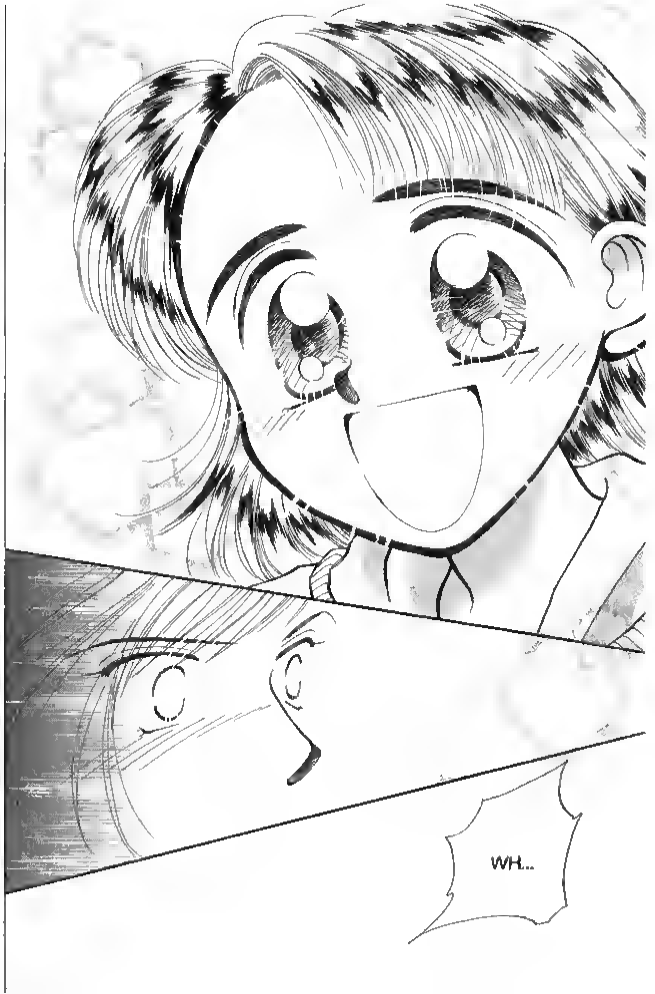
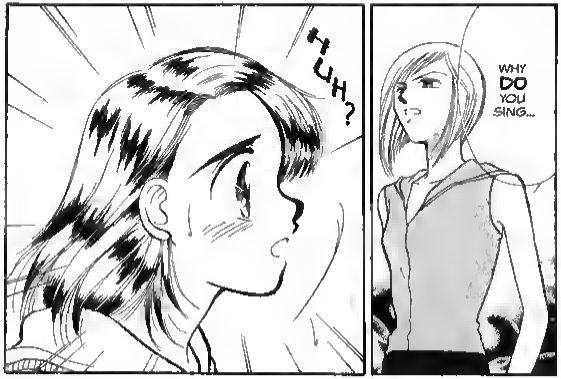

SELA..!
KLIK!

SH..
SHUT UP.
IT'S NONE
OF YOUR
BUSINESS
IS IT?
WHAT?!
I'M
GLAD.
YOU
CAN
GO ON
TODAY_!!
HMPH..
YOU'RE
IN MY
WAY!
SHOVE!!
LET'S GO!!
WE'RE LATE FOR
REHEARSALS.
WE CAN'T BE
BOTHERED BY
PEOPLE LIKE
THIS!


WH...

!
JUST NOW THAT ARGUMENT...
I... LOST MY TEMPER AND..


HUH?
WHY DO YOU SING...

NOBODY'S EVEN LISTENING TO MY SONGS!
THEY FLATTER YOU ONE DAY, BUT IF YOUR POPULARITY SLIPS EVEN A LITTLE, YOU'RE HISTORY..
THAT'S THE KIND OF PLACE THIS IS...
THAT'S NOT TRUE!! I WANT TO HEAR YOUR SONGS!!
I LOVE THEM AND I LEARN A LOT!

I'M HAPPY WHEN I SING, SO..
JUST LOVE THE SONGS, THE DANCING..
.. WHAT?!
IF IT'S ONLY FOR YOURSELF THEN WHY DON'T YOU SING BY YOURSELF AT HOME ..!
THAT'S IT?!
WHY DO YOU SING IN A PLACE LIKE THIS?!
BECAUSE YOU WANT MONEY?! YOU WANT TO BE POPULAR?! YOU WANT TO BE A STAR?!
WHAT'S IT MATTER, ANYWAY?!
WHAT'S THE USE?!

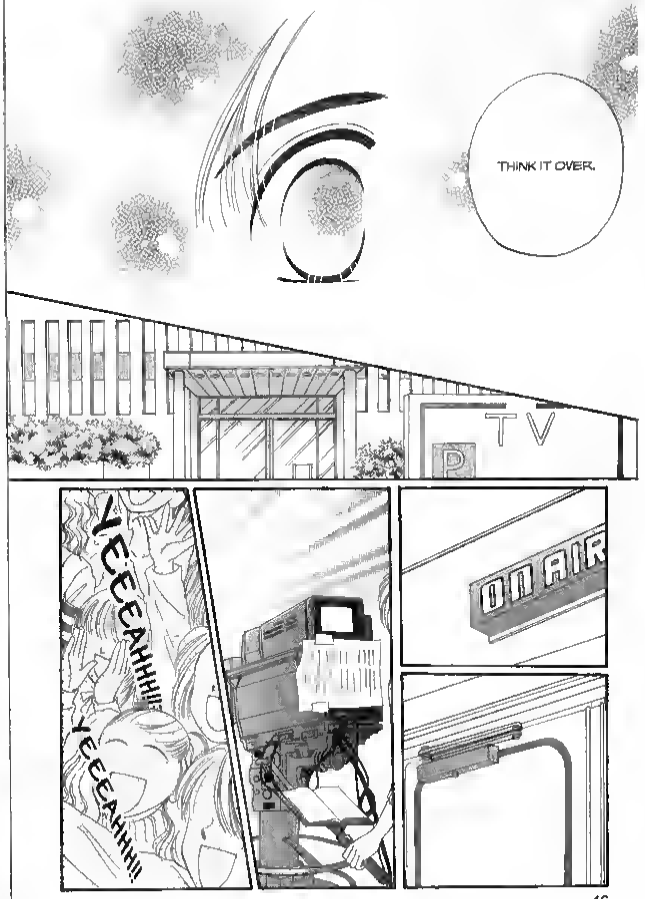
THAT'S NOT THE ONLY REASON WHY YOU SING, IS IT...?

KLK
KLK...
KLK
OH.. ALL RIGHT
UM, NOT YET..
AIRI, ARE YOU READY? REHEARSALS STARTING
KLK
TIK
SLAM!!

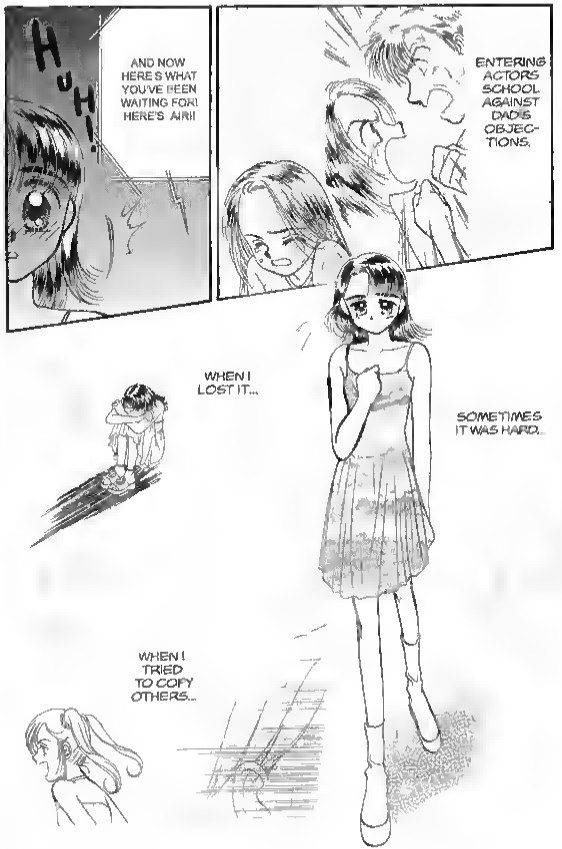
SELACA

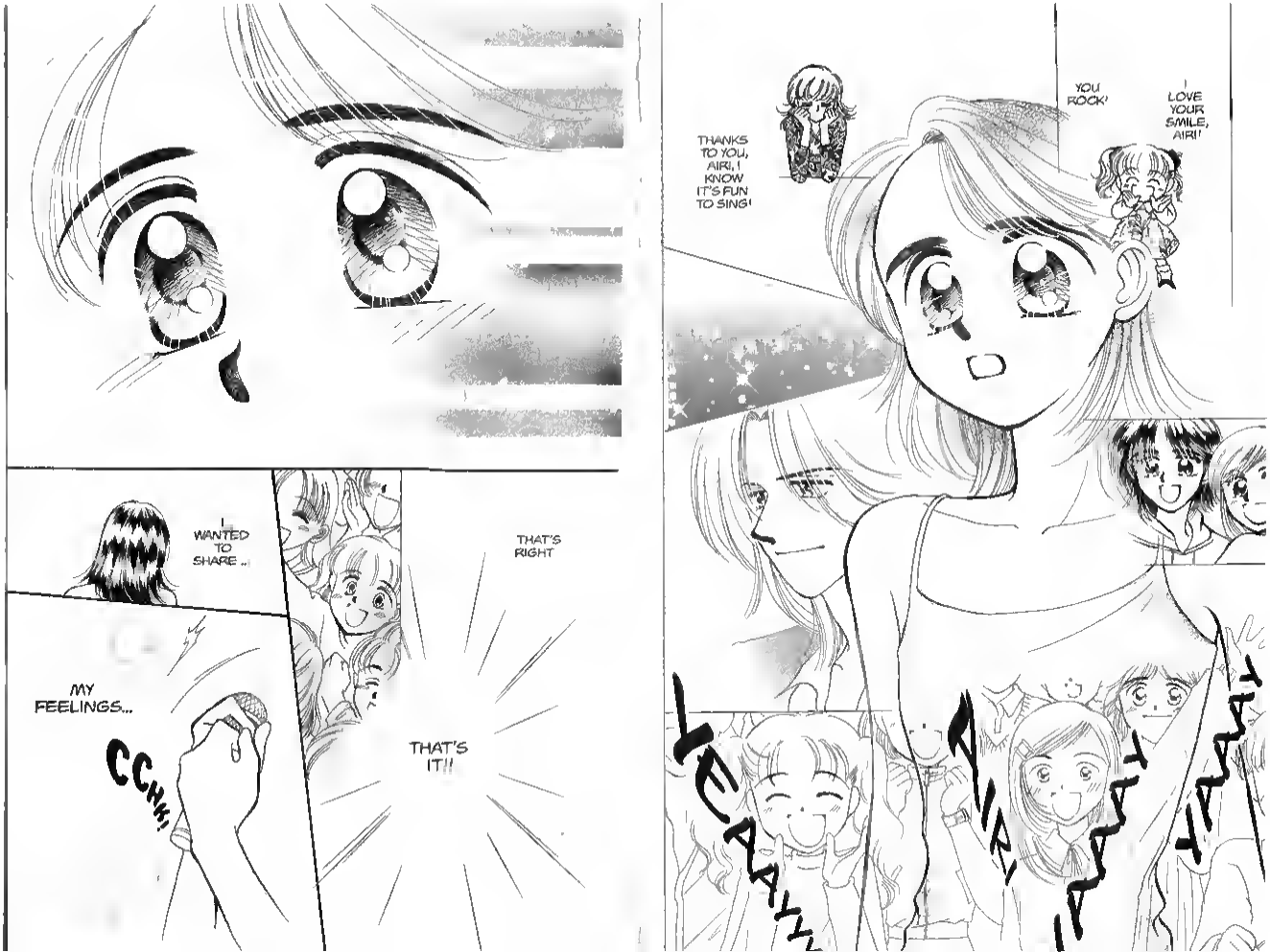
AIRI...
VACANT ROOM

WHY AM I HERE...?
ALLRIGHT!!!
YAAAAY!


THINK IT OVER.
TV
YEEEAHHH!!!
YEEEAHHH!!!
ON AIR

WHEN I JUST WANTED TO RUN AWAY...
ONCE I EVEN THOUGHT OF QUITTING
AND AFTER ALL THAT, THE REASON WHY I STILL WANT TO BE A PRO... A REAL SINGER...?!
THE REASON WHY, AFTER ALL THAT, I STAND ON THIS STAGE...?!
YEEEEAHHH!!
YEAAAH!


HUH!
AND NOW HERE'S WHAT YOU'VE BEEN WAITING FOR! HERE'S AIR!!
ENTERING ACTORS SCHOOL AGAINST DAD'S OBJECTIONS.
WHEN I LOST IT...
SOMETIMES IT WAS HARD...
WHEN I TRIED TO COPY OTHERS...


I WANTED TO SHARE ..
THAT'S RIGHT
MY FEELINGS...
CCHH!
THAT'S IT!!
THANKS TO YOU, AIRI, I KNOW IT'S FUN TO SING!
YOU ROCK!
I LOVE YOUR SMILE, AIRI!
YEAAAH!
AIRI!
YEAAAH!

AND IF I CAN MAKE ONE MORE PERSON HAPPY WITH MY SONGS, THEN...!!
YAAY!
AIR!
THANK YOU VERY MUCH!
YEAAAH!

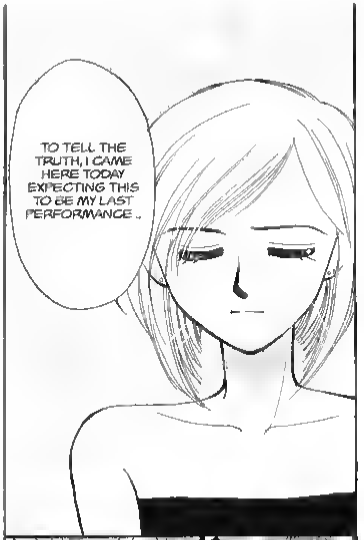
MY EXCITEMENT WHEN I ENTERED ACTORS SCHOOL
MY EXCITEMENT WHEN I LISTENED TO ISSA AND THE GUYS SING...
THAT THRILL I FELT THAT I COULDN'T EXPLAIN...
THAT...
THAT'S WHAT I WANT TO TELL!
TO EVERY ONE WHO HEARS ME
TO EVERY-ONE WHO LISTENS TO MY SONGS...!!

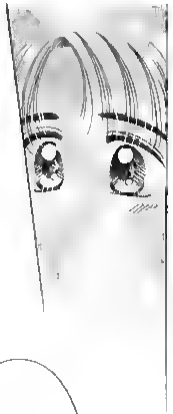
SSHH...
THIS... THIS CAN'T BE...

INTRODUCE SELA!! PLEASE EXIT STAGE AFTER HANDING OVER THE MIKE
AND NEXT UP IS SELAGA MORI!! I CAN'T WAIT TO HEAR HER SING!!
HERE SHE IS! THANK YOU!
KLK!
!!
KLK...
KLK!
...HUH...?!

WH WHAT THE HECK IS GOING ON
COELAN
YOU CAN DO IT!!!
YEEAAAAAAAH...
SOAR
...NH

!
SE SÉLA, YOU CAN DO IT!
MUTTER
NEVER MIND THE LIES IN THOSE MAGAZINES!
IT MIGHT BE PAINFUL...
BUT SING!!
WHISPER
THAT'S RIGHT! YOU CAN DO IT..
MUTTER
I'M ROOTING FOR YOU, TOO!

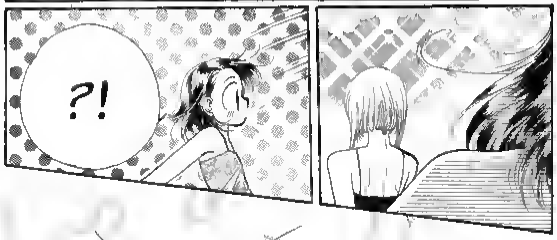

TO TELL THE TRUTH, I CAME HERE TODAY EXPECTING THIS TO BE MY LAST PERFORMANCE..



I... NEED TO APOLOGIZE TO ALL OF YOU..

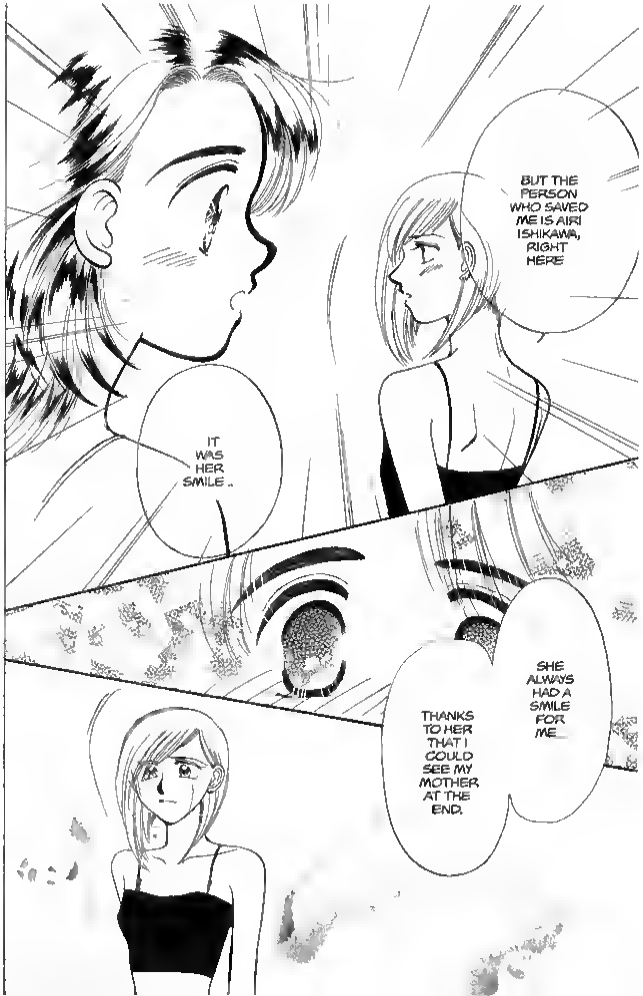
WHAAA?
WHEN MY MOTHER DIED
I DIDN'T KNOW HOW I COULD GO ON SINGING...

HERE
THEY'RE ROOTING FOR ME..!!
THEY'RE WAITING


?!

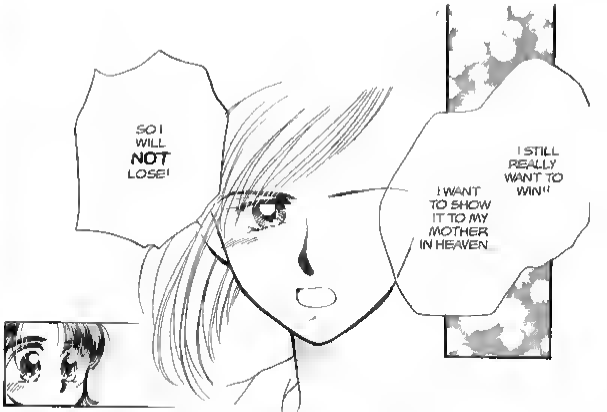
I'VE REMEMBERED WHAT IT WAS LIKE WHEN I FIRST STARTED SINGING..!
AND TONIGHT... AFTER HEARING AIRI'S SONG...

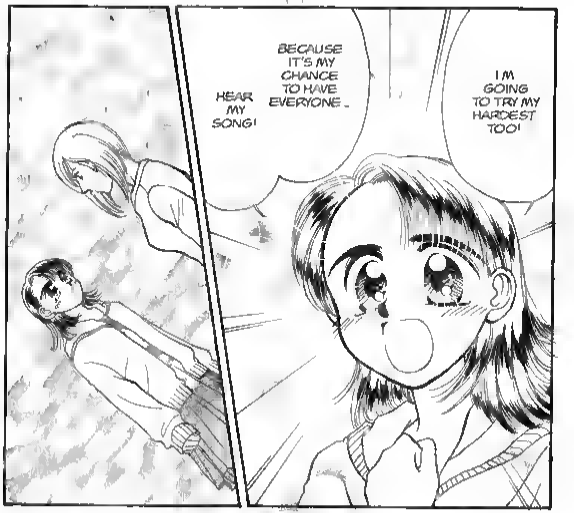
MOTHER... NOW AT LAST I UNDERSTAND..!
AIRI!!
YEEAAAAAH!!
SELA!
AIRI... AND EVERYONE... THANK YOU.
THIS... THIS SONG IS FOR ALL OF YOU!
YAAAAY!!


BUT THE PERSON WHO SAVED ME IS AIRI ISHIKAWA, RIGHT HERE
IT WAS HER SMILE..
SHE ALWAYS HAD A SMILE FOR ME...
THANKS TO HER THAT I COULD SEE MY MOTHER AT THE END.

LOOKS LIKE YOU MADE ANOTHER FRIEND...
P.F.T
HIGH SCH
JAPAN SPORT
BUT DON'T THINK I WON'T FIGHT YOU FOR THAT AWARD!
VACANT ROOM
THANKS, AIRI..
AND SO THERE WAS A SLIGHT CHANGE IN TODAY'S LIVE BROADCAST
THE TWO GIRLS ARE BOTH NOMINEES FOR THE MUSIC AWARDS

THINK-U
OH..
OKAY THEN BYE
WELL, I'LL BE WATCHING FROM THE GUEST SEATS SO..
AT LAST IT'S HERE..!!
THE DAY HAS COME..!!
AIRI..
WHAT?
KA-THUMP!

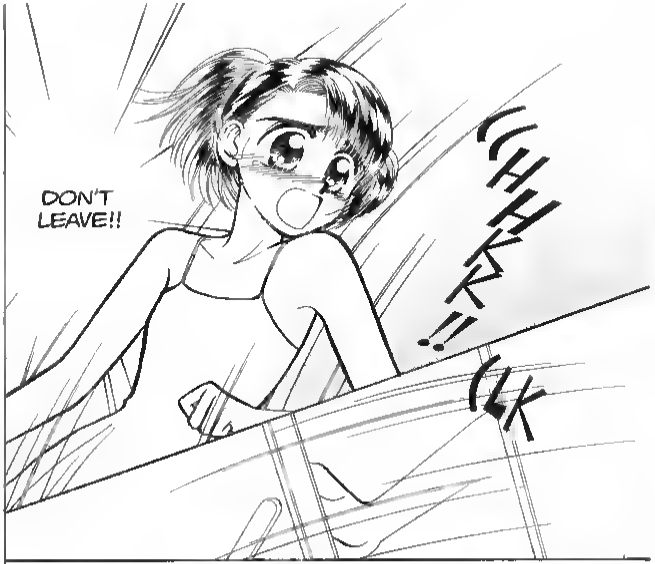

SO I WILL NOT LOSE!
I WANT TO SHOW IT TO MY MOTHER IN HEAVEN..
I STILL REALLY WANT TO WIN!!

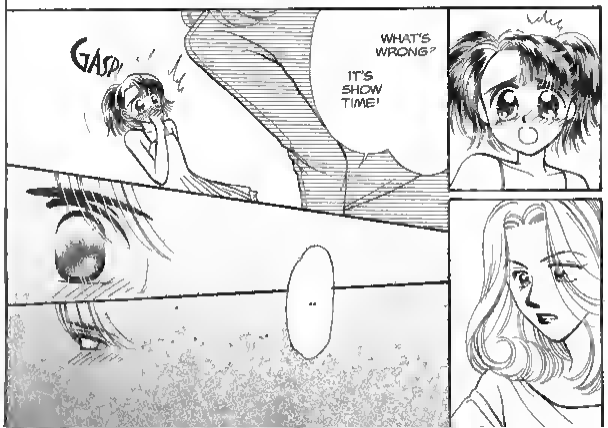

I'M GOING TO TRY MY HARDEST TOO!
BECAUSE IT'S MY CHANCE TO HAVE EVERYONE.. HEAR MY SONG!

HE..
HE'S
LEAVING..?!
THE
35TH ANNUAL
MUSIC AWARDS
SHOW WILL
NOW BEGIN!!

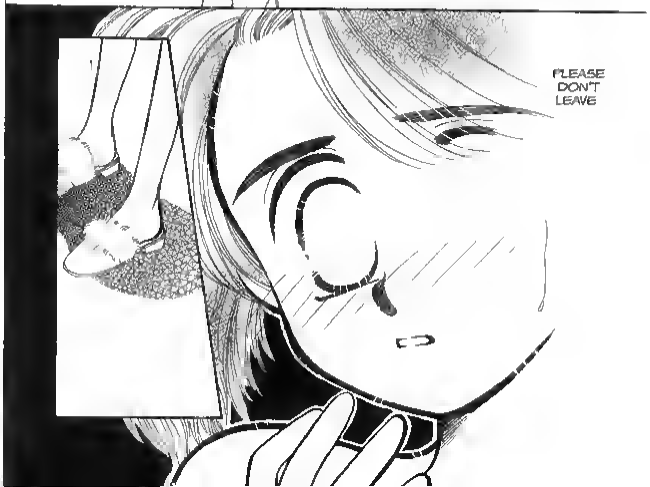
WHEN
THIS IS OVER,
I'M THINKING
OF GOING TO
AMERICA...
TO L.A
I'M.
WHAT?!
I WANT TO
STUDY MUSIC
PRODUCTION
SERIOUSLY
OVER THERE...
I WANT TO
PRODUCE
A GREAT
SINGER...
...YOU...!
KNOCK
'EM
DEAD!

I WON'T BE ABLE TO SEE HIM ANYMORE...?!
KA-THUMP!
WHAT ARE THESE FEELINGS...?!
I'M THINKING OF GOING TO AMERICA. TO L.A...


DON'T LEAVE!!
GHKRR!!
GLK


GASP!
WHAT'S WRONG?
IT'S SHOW TIME!
..

BUT...
I KNOW I DON'T HAVE THE RIGHT TO SAY THIS..
BUT
VACANT ROOM
SO...
I, EVEN THOUGH HE SAID HE LIKED ME, I NEVER ANSWERED HIM.


PLEASE DON'T LEAVE

YOU WATCH! I'M GONNA SING MY HEART OUT!
WE WILL NOW INTRODUCE THE NOMINEES FOR FIRST PRIZE!
SELACA!
FAT!
O OKAY
WHAT WAS I GOING TO TELL HIM...
THAT'S RIGHT ..RIGHT! NOW I'D BETTER CONCENTRATE ON SINGING..!
ENTRY NO. 1 MISS SELACA MORI! HERE SHE IS!
OOHOOO!
SELA!
AAAAY!

OKAY...
GLEN!!
YAAAY!
YEEAAAY!
I'M SO STUPID...
IF I RAN AFTER HIM...
WHAT WOULD I SAY TO HIM...

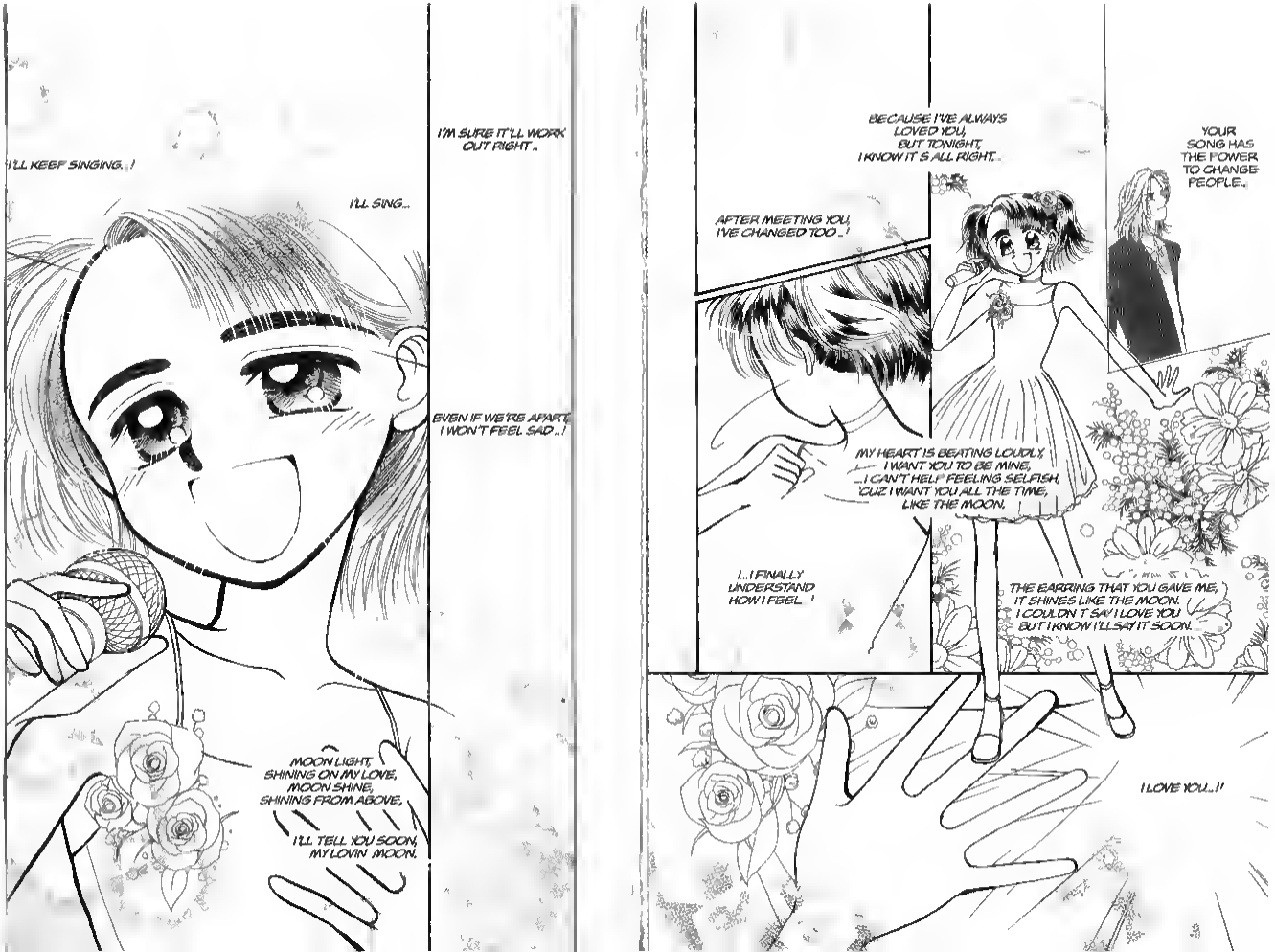
SHE'S TREMBLING IN FEAR...!
...I HATE TO SAY THIS, BUT SELACA IS GOOD.
BETTER THAN EVER.
LOOKS LIKE...
SHE'LL WALK AWAY WITH FIRST PRIZE!
BUT LOOK AT THE NEW COMER!

FLASH!
AH..!!
WOBBLE..
I CAN'T DO IT..! I CAN'T STAND UP...

I HAVE STAGE FRIGHT..!
I CAN'T STOP SHAKING!
OH NO..! THIS NEVER HAPPENED BEFORE !!
JOLT!
AND NEXT UP IS ENTRY NO 2 MISS AIRI ISHIKAWA! HERE SHE IS!
SHIVR
SHIVR
I..I HAVE TO GO ON...!

IT'S AWESOME
OOOH...
HOW JUST SEEING HIM..
CAN MAKE ME FEEL BETTER.

HERE'S "FIRST MOON" SUNG BY AIRI ISHIKAWA
AIRI?
SIGH
..OH...

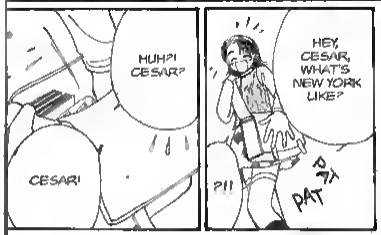

I'LL KEEP SINGING..!
I'LL SING..
I'M SURE IT'LL WORK OUT RIGHT..
EVEN IF WE'RE APART, I WON'T FEEL SAD..!
MOON LIGHT, SHINING ON MY LOVE, MOON SHINE, SHINING FROM ABOVE,
I'LL TELL YOU SOON, MY LOVIN' MOON.
BECAUSE I'VE ALWAYS LOVED YOU, BUT TONIGHT, I KNOW IT'S ALL RIGHT..
YOUR SONG HAS THE POWER TO CHANGE PEOPLE..
AFTER MEETING YOU, I'VE CHANGED TOO..!
MY HEART IS BEATING LOUDLY, I WANT YOU TO BE MINE, ..I CAN'T HELP FEELING SELFISH, 'CUZ I WANT YOU ALL THE TIME, LIKE THE MOON.
I..I FINALLY UNDERSTAND HOW I FEEL..!
THE EARRING THAT YOU GAVE ME, IT SHINES LIKE THE MOON. I COULDN'T SAY I LOVE YOU BUT I KNOW I'LL SAY IT SOON.
I LOVE YOU..!!

AIRI ISHIKAWA!
THIS YEAR'S FIRST PRIZE AWARD WINNER IS
THE JUDGES HAVE DECIDED
AH!
WHAT...!!
THIS PRIZE GOES TO A NEW SINGER THE YOUNGEST EVER!!
BASED UPON THE PANEL'S DECISION AND THE AUDIENCE'S RESPONSE! AND IN LIGHT OF HER TALENTS AND PROMISING FUTURE THIS YEAR...
IS HOW I TELL HIM I LOVE HIM...
BECAUSE SINGING...
AIRI!!
YOU CAN DO IT, AIRI♥
HOORAAAY!
YAAAAAY!

I'D LIKE TO ANNOUNCE A NEW PROJECT!
IN TWO WEEKS WE'LL MOVE OUR PRODUCTION COMPANY TO NEW YORK CITY
AND WITH AIRI ISHIKAWA AS OUR FIRST PROJECT,
WE WILL BLAZE A TRAIL IN AMERICA AND NEXT, THE WORLD!
WOAAAAH!!!
M. ME, THE TRAILBLAZER OF THE WORLD_?!

BECAUSE NOW I CAN SING WITH SUCH JOY IN MY HEART!
I'M SURE MY MOTHER IS HAPPY FOR ME
FUNNY... EVEN THOUGH I LOST...
I FEEL HAPPY...!
CONGRATULATIONS, AIRI!
AND NOW AN ANNOUNCEMENT FROM AIRI'S PRODUCER MS. TAKAYA
CONGRATULATIONS, AIRI!
EVERYONE !!
THANKS...!
YAAAAAY

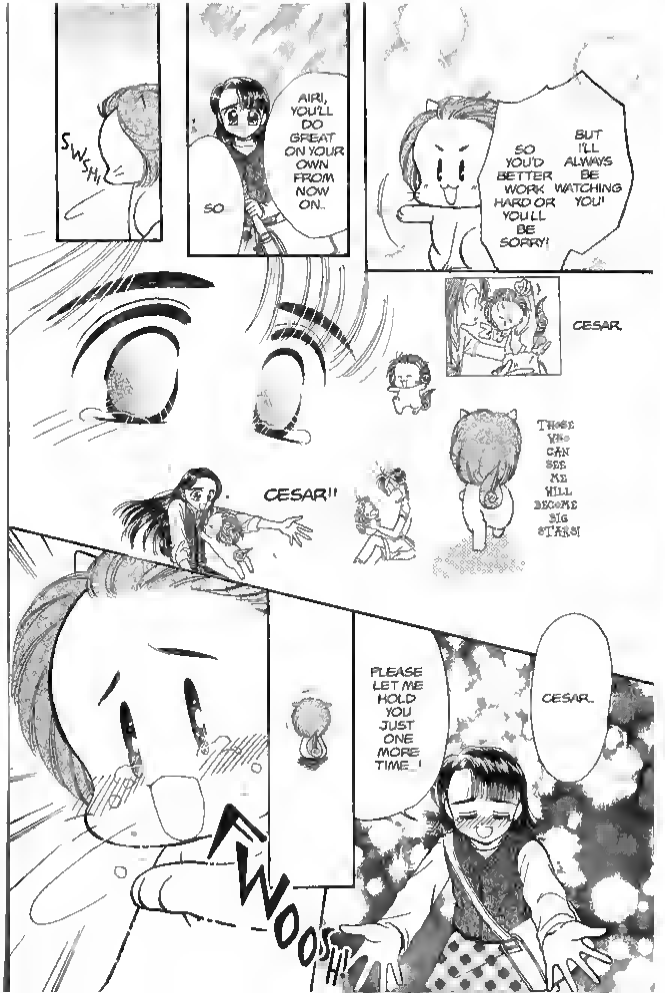
TWO WEEKS LATER
MASA-CHIKA
COME ON, WE'LL BE LATE, AIRI
OH...
OKAY!
I WONDER IF HE'S ALREADY IN LOS ANGELES...
WAIT..
I DIDN'T GET TO SEE HIM AFTER ALL...


HUH?! CESAR?
CESAR!
HEY, CESAR, WHAT'S NEW YORK LIKE?
?!!
PAT PAT

IT'S THANKS TO ALL OF YOU I'VE BEEN ABLE GET THIS FAR.
MY SUPPORTIVE FAMILY...
MY FRIENDS AND TEACHERS, AND EVERYONE WHO LISTENS TO MY SONGS...!
BELIEVE IN YOURSELF ! HAVE FAITH..
AIRI

I'LL BE HAPPY AS LONG AS I CAN SING. !!
WHEREVER I GO_!!
YAAAAAY!!
I'LL KEEP TRYING TO DO MY BEST, SO THANK YOU! I'M COUNTING ON YOUR SUPPORT_!

E-EXCUSE ME..PLEASE LET ME THROUGH!
WAIT..!!
OH!
AIRI, TELL US HOW YOU FEEL!
CLICK!
SNAP!


SWISH
AIRI, YOU'LL DO GREAT ON YOUR OWN FROM NOW ON..
SO
SO YOU'D BETTER WORK HARD OR YOU'LL BE SORRY!
BUT I'LL ALWAYS BE WATCHING YOU!
CESAR
THOSE WHO CAN SEE ME WILL BECOME BIG STARS!
CESAR!!
CESAR.
PLEASE LET ME HOLD YOU JUST ONE MORE TIME.
WOOSH

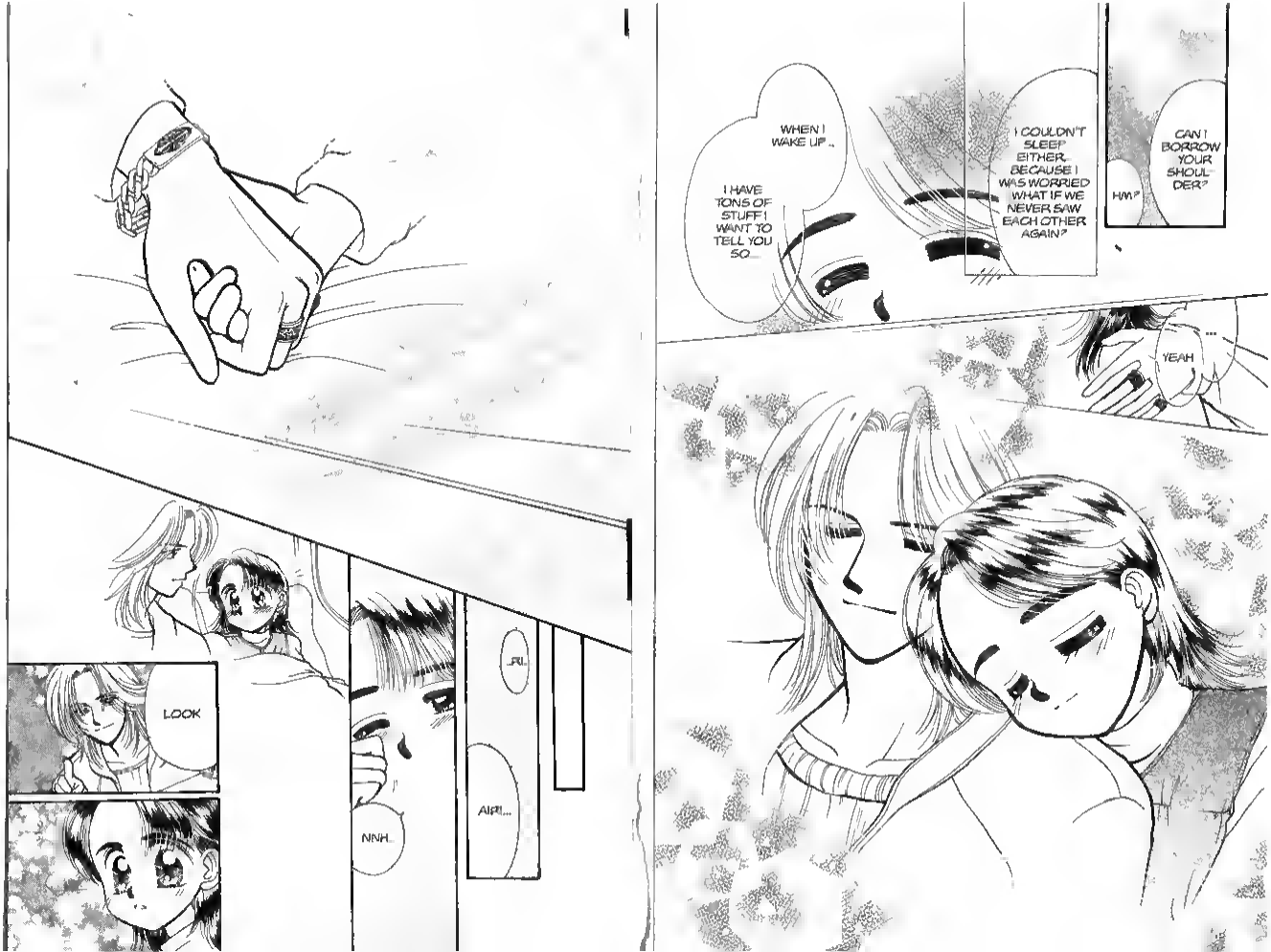
SOUTH WING ARRI
WHAT'S THE MATTER, CESAR. WE'LL BE LATE!
I'M NOT GOING WITH YOU ANYMORE.

ABOUT MASACHIKA...
WHERE IS HE? WILL I EVER SEE HIM AGAIN?
I NEVER TOLD HIM HOW I FEEL...!
WHAT IS IT?
MS. TAKAYA.. UM...
IT'S NOTHING!
OH... NO, IT'S OKAY
I'M TOO EMBARRASSED TO ASK
WHAT SHOULD I DO?
BOOOM
NO!! I DON'T WANT THAT!!
AIRI, WE'LL BE TAKING OFF SOON.
PLEEEASE SIT DOWN

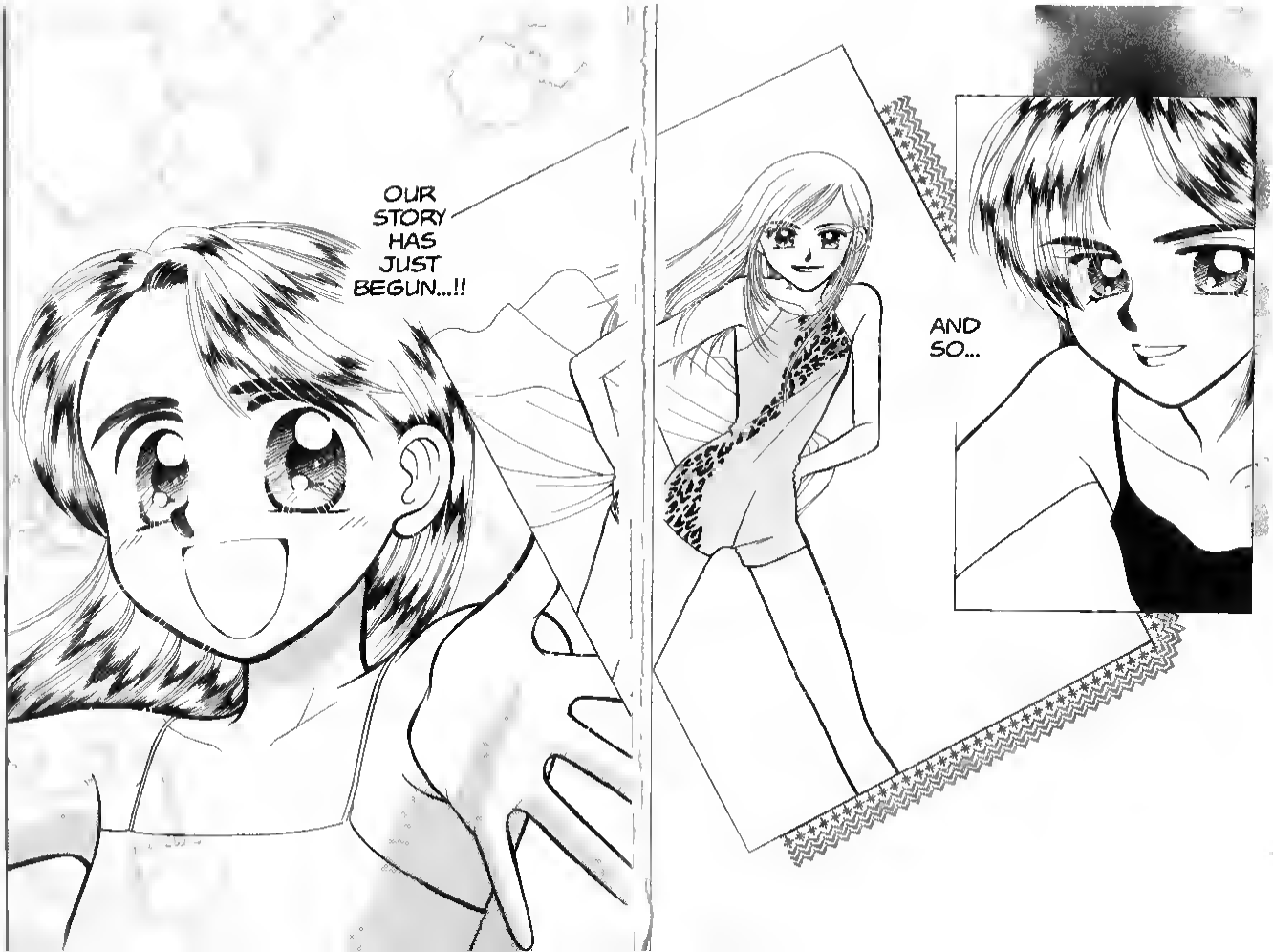
THANK YOU..FOR WATCHING OVER ME...
THANK YOU.

I JUST REALLY MADE IT
THEN I FIGURED, WHAT THE HECK, MIGHT AS WELL SEE NEW YORK, TOO...
IT WAS PROBABLY MY IMAGINATION BUT...
CESAR!!
I'M SO HAPPY...
I'VE BEEN WANTING TO SEE YOU FOR SO LONG!
HUH?!
IF YOU TELL ME THAT YOU WANT TO SEE ME, I'LL FLY THERE NO MATTER WHERE YOU ARE...
SILLY!
..

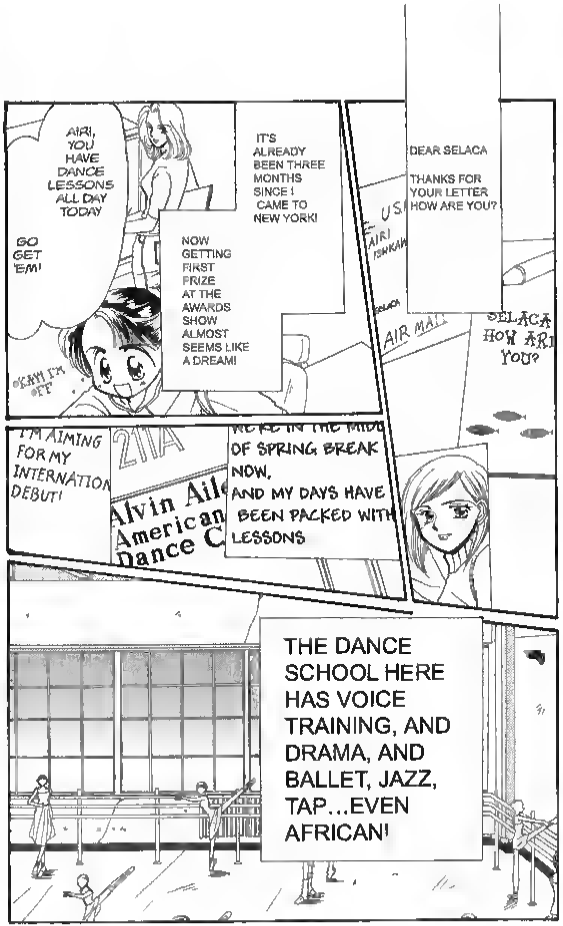
YO.
N...NO WAY, WHY...?!
ISN'T THIS PLANE BOUND FOR NEW YORK?!
KATHU
IMTHUMP
I WAS GOING TO LEAVE FOR LOS ANGELES BUT...
IT'S WEIRD, BUT..
..
!!
I HEARD A VOICE SAY, "WATCH OVER AIRI"...
THAT NIGHT...


LOOK
NNH..
AIP!...
...
YEAH
HM?
CAN I BORROW YOUR SHOULDER?
I COULDN'T SLEEP EITHER... BECAUSE I WAS WORRIED WHAT IF WE NEVER SAW EACH OTHER AGAIN?
WHEN I WAKE UP...
I HAVE TONS OF STUFF I WANT TO TELL YOU SO...

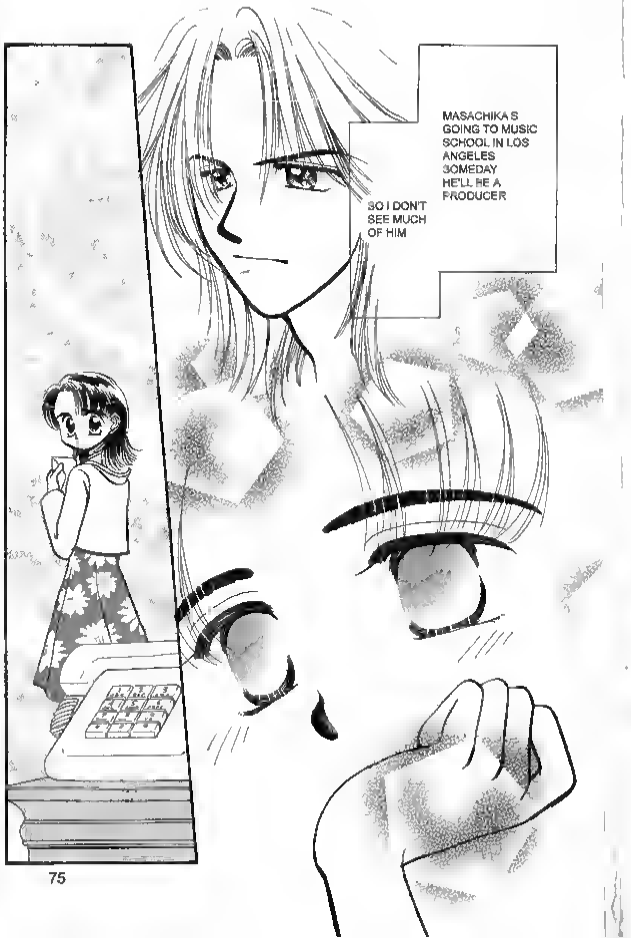
THERE'S... MY NEW STAGE...!!


OUR STORY HAS JUST BEGUN...!!
AND SO...

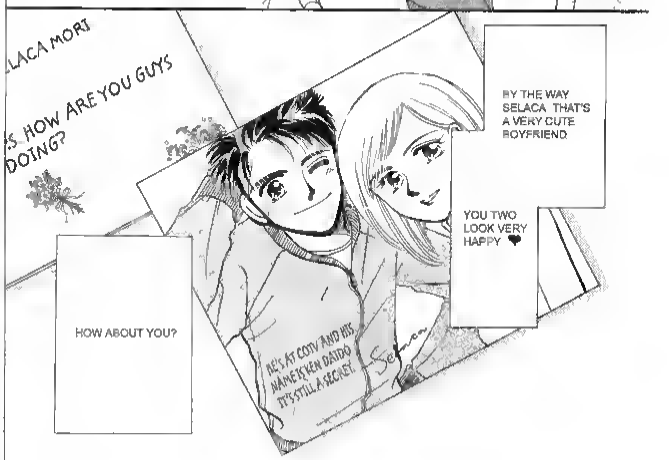
DANCE WITH YOU
B.B. EXPLOSION EXTRA MANGA

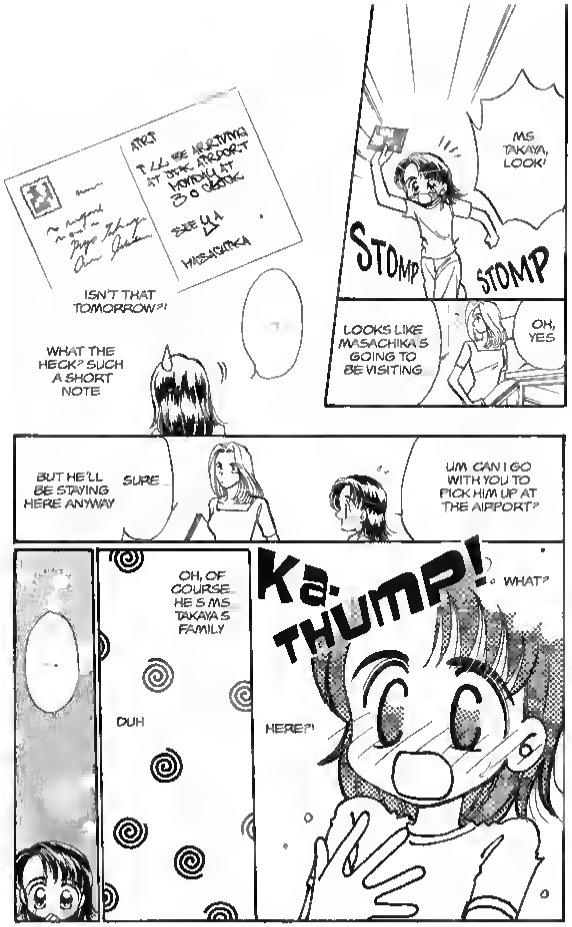

AIRI, YOU HAVE DANCE LESSONS ALL DAY TODAY
GO GET 'EM!
OKAY I'M OFF
IT'S ALREADY BEEN THREE MONTHS SINCE I CAME TO NEW YORK!
NOW GETTING FIRST PRIZE AT THE AWARDS SHOW ALMOST SEEMS LIKE A DREAM!
DEAR SELACA
THANKS FOR YOUR LETTER HOW ARE YOU?
AIR MAIL
SELACA HOW ARE YOU?
I'M AIMING FOR MY INTERNATIONAL DEBUT!
21A
Alvin Ailey American Dance C
WE'RE IN THE MIDDLE OF SPRING BREAK NOW,
AND MY DAYS HAVE BEEN PACKED WITH LESSONS
THE DANCE SCHOOL HERE HAS VOICE TRAINING, AND DRAMA, AND BALLET, JAZZ, TAP...EVEN AFRICAN!

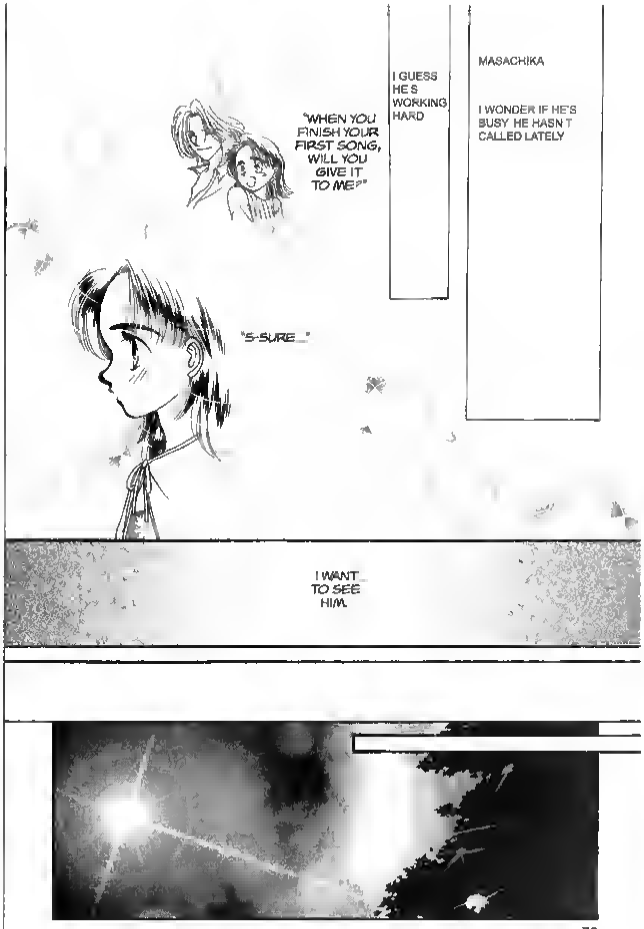
AMERICA
NEW YORK CITY
NNH
WHAT A GREAT DAY!
OKAY! I'M GONNA REALLY WORK OUT TODAY TOO!


MASACHIKA'S GOING TO MUSIC SCHOOL IN LOS ANGELES SOMEDAY HE'LL BE A PRODUCER
SO I DON'T SEE MUCH OF HIM

SO IT'S KINDA EXHAUST ING
HUH? WHAT DID YOU SAY?
EVERYONE'S SO GOOD THAT I'M JUST BARELY KEEPING UP

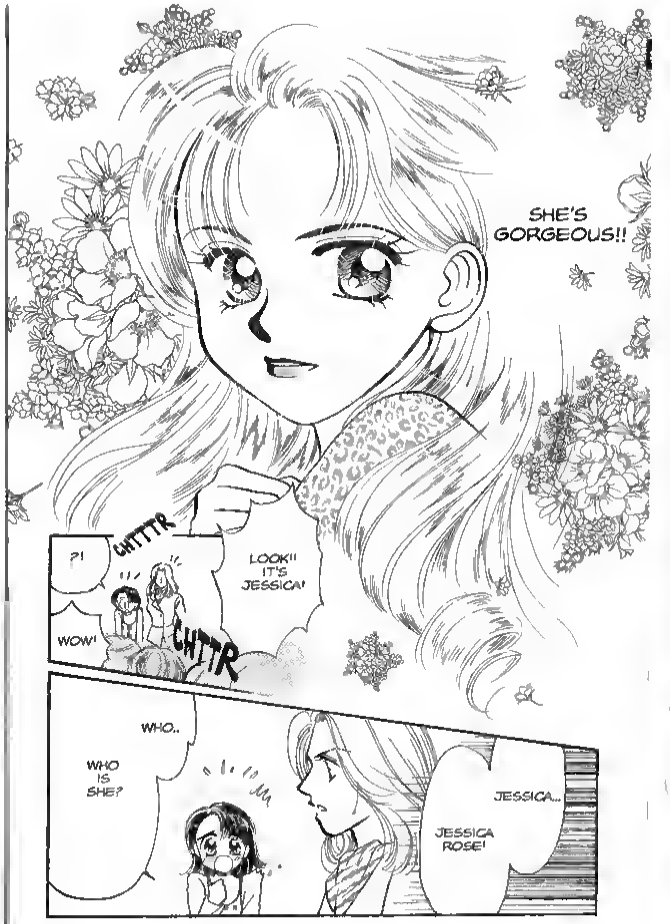

LACA MORI
S, HOW ARE YOU GUYS DOING?
BY THE WAY SELACA, THAT'S A VERY CUTE BOYFRIEND
YOU TWO LOOK VERY HAPPY
HOW ABOUT YOU?
HE'S AT CODY AND HIS NAME IS KEN DAIDO IT'S STILL A SECRET


MS TAKAYA, LOOK!
STOMP
STOMP
OH, YES
LOOKS LIKE MASACHIKA'S GOING TO BE VISITING
ISN'T THAT TOMORROW?!
WHAT THE HECK? SUCH A SHORT NOTE
BUT HE'LL BE STAYING HERE ANYWAY
SURE
UM, CAN I GO WITH YOU TO PICK HIM UP AT THE AIRPORT?
Ka-THUMP!
WHAT?
OH, OF COURSE. HE'S MS. TAKAYA'S FAMILY
DUH
HERE?!


"WHEN YOU FINISH YOUR FIRST SONG, WILL YOU GIVE IT TO ME?"
I GUESS HE'S WORKING HARD
MASACHIKA
I WONDER IF HE'S BUSY. HE HASN'T CALLED LATELY
"S-SURE..."
I WANT... TO SEE HIM.

OH!
STAYED UP ALL NIGHT
MASACHIKA!!
MA
HE LOOKS SO GROWN UP!
KE-KE-KE

AT LAST I'LL SEE MASACHIKA!
WHAT SHOULD I WEAR? ♡
OOH OOH!


SHE'S GORGEOUS!!
?!
CHITTR
LOOK!! IT'S JESSICA!
WOW!
CHITTR
WHO..
WHO IS SHE?
JESSICA...
JESSICA ROSE!

SAYING THAT YOU HAD TO SUDDENLY GO OFF TO NEW YORK!
OH, YOU!
I HAVE BEEN IN NEW YORK
WAGH!
MASACHIKA!
I FLEW OVER ON THE VERY NEXT FLIGHT!
SQUISH!
WHO... WHO'S THIS?!
WHA...

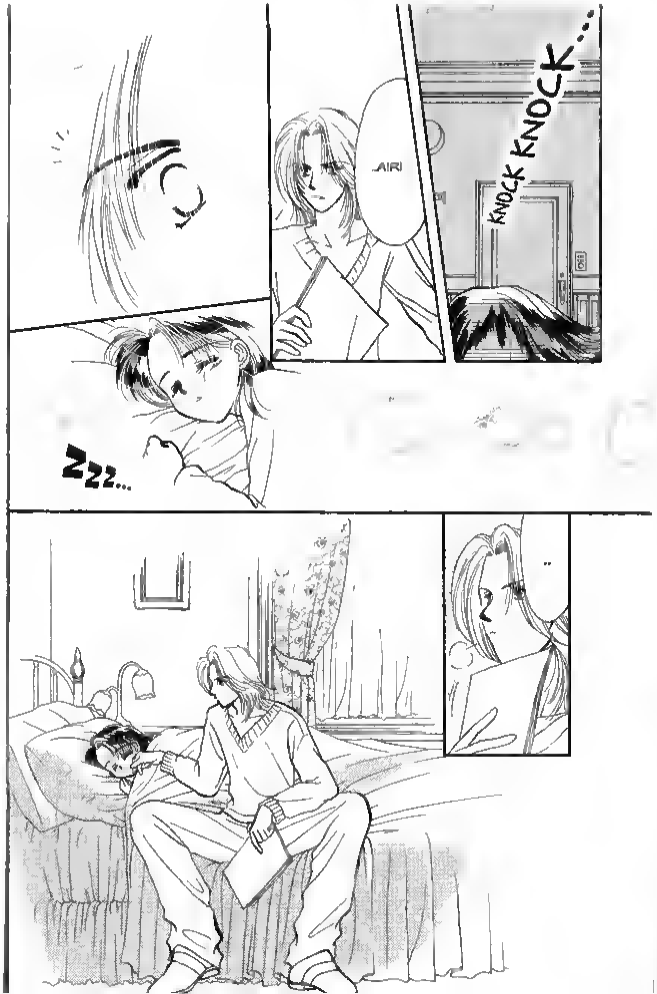
GIRL... GENIUS?!
I'D HEARD THAT SHE WAS AT MASACHIKA'S SCHOOL BUT...
SHE'S ALREADY SIGNED THREE MAJOR DEALS
SHE'S A SINGER SONG-WRITER WHO'S A MEGA-HIT IN AMERICA
EVEN THOUGH SHE'S ONLY 14, SHE'S A GIRL GENIUS WHO'S WON ALL OF THE MUSIC WORLD'S AWARDS
!
HEY, C'MON, LET'S GO TO THIS RES-TAURANT I KNOW. ♡
SHOCK!
...IS THIS YOUR LITTLE SISTER?
OH LET ME INTRODUCE MYSELF, I'M JESSICA! I'VE HEARD THAT YOU'RE ALSO A TALENTED PRODUCER! NICE TO MEET YOU!
AIRI!
MOM...
MOTHER?!
HMPH...
GLARE GLARE
SHE'S AIRI ISHIKAWA
A JAPANESE SINGER
AND WE'RE THE SAME AGE.
GAAH!
OHMIGOD!
SHE'S JUST A KID! AND SHE CALLS HERSELF A SINGER?! I THOUGHT SHE WAS A KINDERGARTENER!

RUSH
RUSH
UM... IT'S OKAY. YOU CAN GO TO THAT GIRL'S PLACE...
IT'S PROBABLY BORING BEING WITH ME, ISN'T IT?
WHAT THE HECK... IS THAT...
DAT!
YOU NEVER WROTE...
B.
BECAUSE

MASACHIKA. ♡
OH
SQUEEZE ♡
HERE'S MY PHONE NUMBER!
I'M STAYING AT A HOTEL, SO...
UH
...
YOU'RE NOT GOOD ENOUGH FOR MASACHIKA!
SHWP...
WELL, SEE YA LATER!
HE'S MINE!
KLK...
..WHAT...?!

I'D APPRECIATE IT IF YOU DIDN'T MAKE MY TALENT CRY
SLAM!!
IT'S NOT LIKE I WANTED TO SAY THOSE THINGS...
I WAS HOPING TO GREET YOU WITH A BIG SMILE.

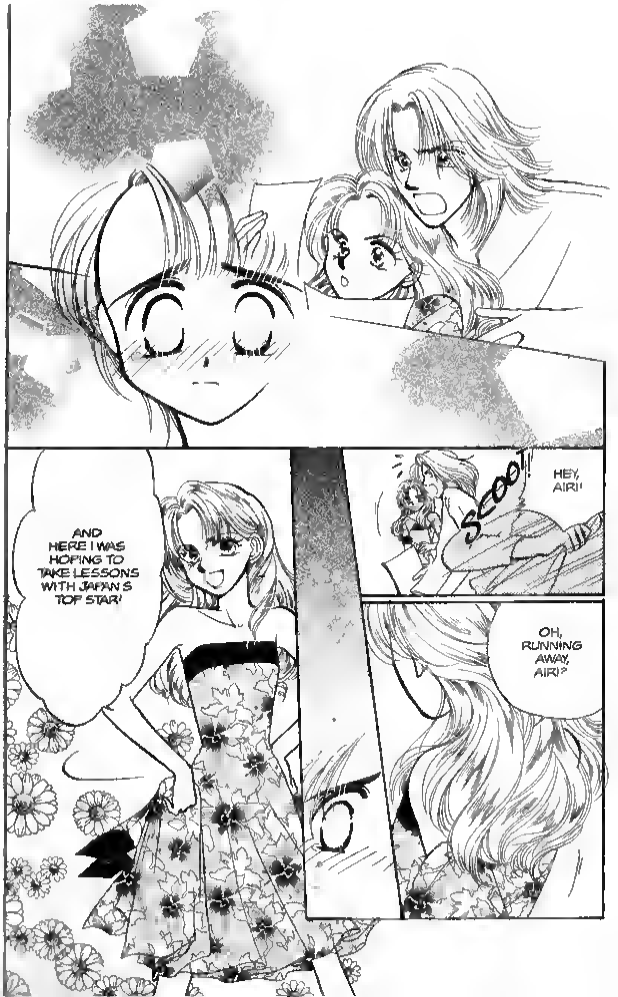
I WAS WAITING FOR YOU ALL THIS TIME!!
I HELD BACK EVEN THOUGH I WANTED TO SEE YOU SO BADLY...
I THOUGHT MAYBE YOU WERE HAVING A HARD TIME IN A NEW PLACE...
BUT I THOUGHT MAYBE YOU WERE BUSY...
HEY! AIRI!
FWOOSH!!


KNOCK KNOCK...
AIRI
ZZZ...
..?

I EVEN STAYED UP LATE FICKING OUT MY OUTFIT...
SNIFFLE...
SHE'S SO PRETTY...
AND I WAS HOPING WE COULD GO OUT TO ALL THESE PLACES, JUST HE TWO OF US...
HE PROBABLY DIDN'T REALLY LIKE ME...
I BET HE HAS TONS OF GIRLFRIENDS

211A
CLAP!
YOU THERE! AGAIN!
OH...
YOU'RE IN THE WAY! STEP BACK!
GACK
ARGH!

GIGGLE!
GIGGLE
WHAAAT? AT THAT LEVEL? IT DOESN'T TAKE MUCH TALENT TO MAKE IT IN JAPAN, DOES IT?
SHE COULD AT LEAST WAIT TILL SHE'S GOOD ENOUGH. SHE'S HOLDING US ALL BACK
BUT THEY SAY SHE'S SUPPOSED TO BE POPULAR IN JAPAN!
WHAT CAN I DO TO GET BETTER...?
IT'S SO FRUSTRATING
KLK...


AND HERE I WAS HOPING TO TAKE LESSONS WITH JAPAN'S TOP STAR!
SCOOT!
HEY, AIRI!
OH, RUNNING AWAY, AIRI?

AIRI..
GAH!
TAP!
JESSICA
I ASKED YOUR MOM.
AND SHE SAID YOU WERE HERE!
...
OOH!
WHAT'S THIS?
GRAB
HEY!
WHAT'S SHE DOING HERE?!
WOW!
WAIT A SEC, LOOK! IT'S JESSICA ROSE!
CHTTR
CHTTR

MASACHIKA IS MINE!
CHUCKLE!
NEXT GROUP!
GASP!
OKAY EVERYONE, CONTINUING FROM WHERE WE LEFT OFF LAST WEEK
FOLLOW THE DANCING!

WHY..
I'M NOT RUNNING AWAY
WHY IS IT...

TOTALLY GORGEOUS!
OMIGOD, WE'LL BE IN THE SAME CLASS AS JESSICA...
CHITTR CHATTR!
...

SHE SEEMS TO BE SURROUNDED BY MUSIC. !!
THIS... MUST BE... WHAT A REALLY GREAT SINGER IS.

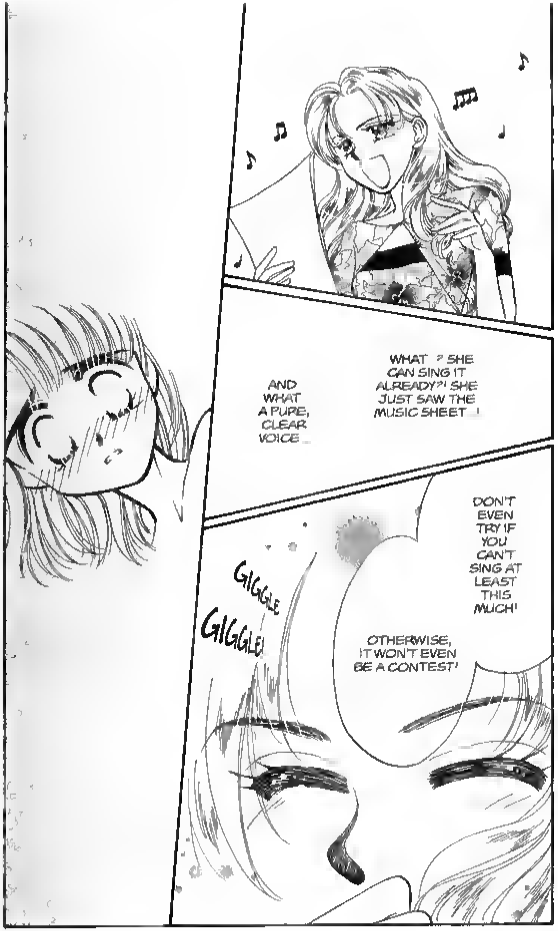
WHY..SHE'S TAKING THIS CLASS FOR THE FIRST TIME TODAY..
SO BEAUTIFUL...

HEY!
HERE'S A SONG THAT MASACHIKA WROTE
LET'S SEE WHO'S WORTHY OF SINGING IT!
GRABI,
WHAT...?!
HEY!
OF COURSE, IF YOU LOSE, YOU'LL HAVE TO GIVE HIM UP?!
HOW CAN I POSSIBLY WIN
AGAINST SOMEONE LIKE HER.
...BUT
HEY MASA
ANYWAY YOU DON'T EVEN UNDERSTAND ENGLISH
NOT MUCH TO LOOK AT, ARE YOU?
YET WE'RE THE SAME AGE?! BUT SHE'S PERFECT...
SO THIS IS WHAT IT'S LIKE... FOR SOMEONE WHO GREW UP IN THIS COUNTRY A REAL PRO FESSIONAL
I'M YOUR COMPETITION!!
...AIR!!

I'M THE ONLY ONE WHO COULD SING THIS RIGHT!
HE HAS THE TALENT TO BECOME AN AMAZING MUSIC PRODUCER!
YOU OF ALL PEOPLE WOULDN'T UNDERSTAND BUT...
BUT...
YEAH... THAT'S PROBABLY RIGHT, I'M SURE..
SO IF YOU REALLY CARE FOR HIM YOU SHOULD QUIT NOW.
I CAN MAKE HIM FAMOUS!
PLUS... IF I, THE COUNTRY'S TOP SINGER PERFORMS IT, HE'LL BECOME A STAR.
I... WANT TO SING THIS...
BUT... STILL...!

...
WHEN YOUR FIRST SONG IS DONE, WILL YOU GIVE IT TO ME?
...SURE...
...BUT!!
...I GUESS...
...!
YOU'RE OKAY WITH THAT, RIGHT, MASACHIKA!
SINCE IT'S THE VERY FIRST SONG THAT I WROTE...

AND ANOTHER THING, AIRI...
HE'LL BE THE JUDGE...
HE'S THE ONLY SUCCESSFUL JAPANESE MUSIC PRODUCER IN AMERICA
I HAVE A FRIEND WHO'S A PRODUCER.
OKAY... WE'LL HAVE A CONTEST IN THREE DAYS!


AND WHAT A PURE, CLEAR VOICE...
WHAT? SHE CAN SING IT ALREADY?! SHE JUST SAW THE MUSIC SHEET!
GIGGLE GIGGLE
DON'T EVEN TRY IF YOU CAN'T SING AT LEAST THIS MUCH!
OTHERWISE, IT WON'T EVEN BE A CONTEST!

KRRR
YOU'VE ALREADY DECIDED YOU HAVE NO CHANCE AGAINST HER, DON'T YOU?!
WHAT YOU NEED TO DO IS WORK HARD INSTEAD OF GETTING ALL WEEPY!
FORGET IT...FINE! I GET IT!!

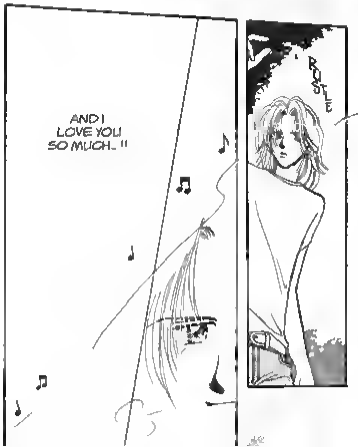
CLICK
WHAT CAN I DO...?!
IT'S NO USE. HER VOICE WON'T LEAVE MY HEAD..
MASA-CHIKA.
...WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN DOING SINCE COMING HERE?
THIS PART IS..

WHEN THIS IS OVER, I'M THINKING OF GOING TO AMERICA.. TO LOS ANGELES
I'M ..
I WANT TO STUDY MUSIC PRODUC-TION SERIOUSLY ...OVER THERE...
WHAT?!
I WANT TO BECOME A GREAT ARTIST ...YOU...!
YOUR SONG S BORING
YOU... FIGURE IT OUT
..BUT THE ENTERTAINMENT BUSINESS IS NO PLACE FOR A GENTLE GIRL LIKE YOU!
IF YOU WANT TO QUIT IT'S NOW OR NEVER.

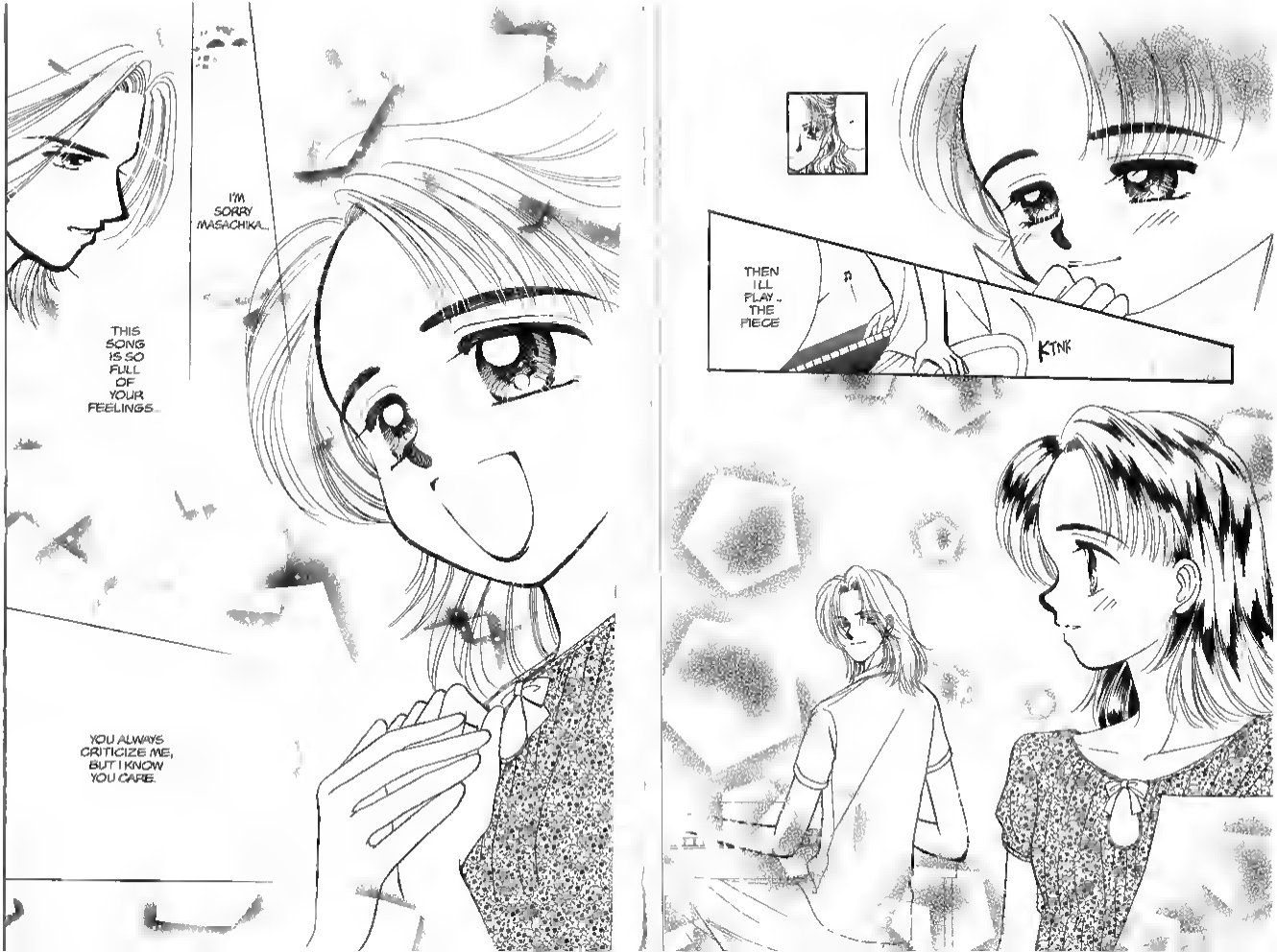
IF SHE SINGS IT, THE SONG WILL BE A HIT...
ANYWAY, SHE HAS MORE TALENT...
DASH
AND MASACHIKA WILL BE RESPECTED IN AMERICA.
NO MORE. WHO CARES ABOUT ME...!
IT'S THE VERY VERY FIRST SONG THAT I WROTE..
NO MORE! AS LONG AS I DON'T SING IT ..

THIS IS THE PRODUCER, MR. MITO.
I ASKED IF HE COULD SPARE SOME TIME
HE'S FAMOUS HERE
NORMALLY, YOU'D NEVER GET TO MEET HIM
H-HI! I'M ARI ISHIKAWA.
NOW! WHO'LL SING FIRST?!
SOUNDS GOOD!! I'D BE SORRY IF I SANG FIRST.
I I'D LIKE TO SING...
...RIGHT?
?!

CRUNCH!
I...NEARLY FORGOT...!

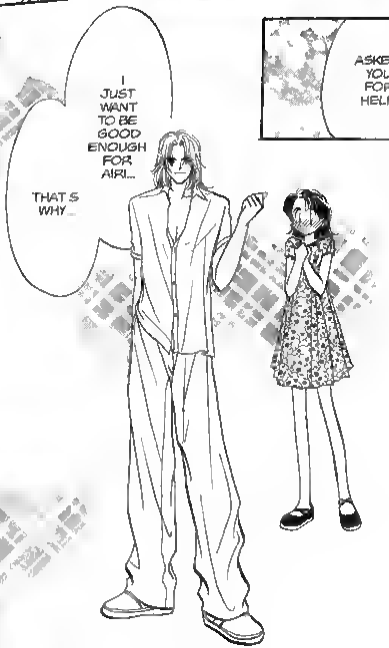

AND I LOVE YOU SO MUCH..!!

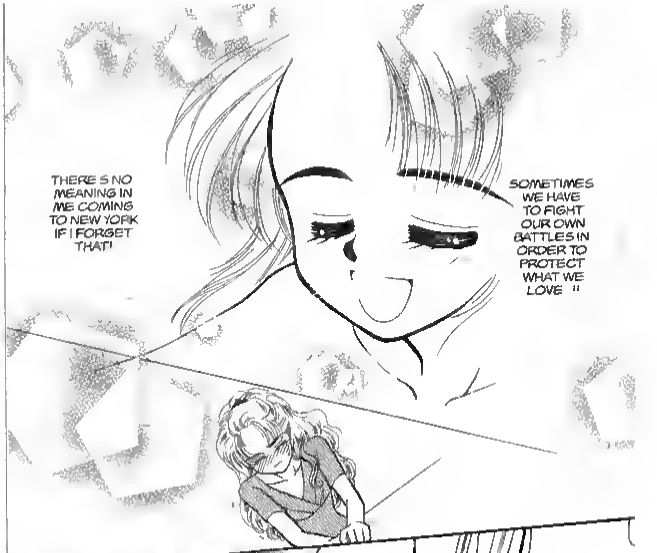
SIGH
YOU'D BEEN WORKING SO HARD


I'M SORRY MASACHIKA...
THIS SONG IS SO FULL OF YOUR FEELINGS...
YOU ALWAYS CRITICIZE ME, BUT I KNOW YOU CARE.
THEN I'LL PLAY THE PIECE
KTNK

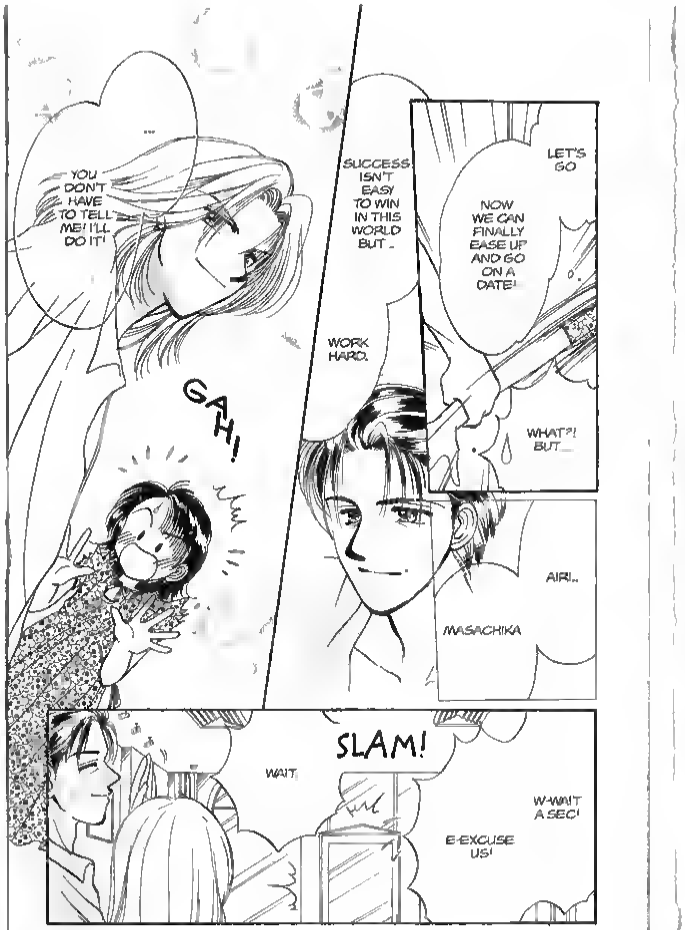
I'M THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN HELP MASACHIKA!
BUT AIRI! THIS DOESN'T MEAN THAT I'VE LOST"!
IT'S AIRI'S WIN
OKAY, I'LL ADMIT IT JUST FOR THIS SONG..!

ASKED YOU FOR HELP
NO ONE...

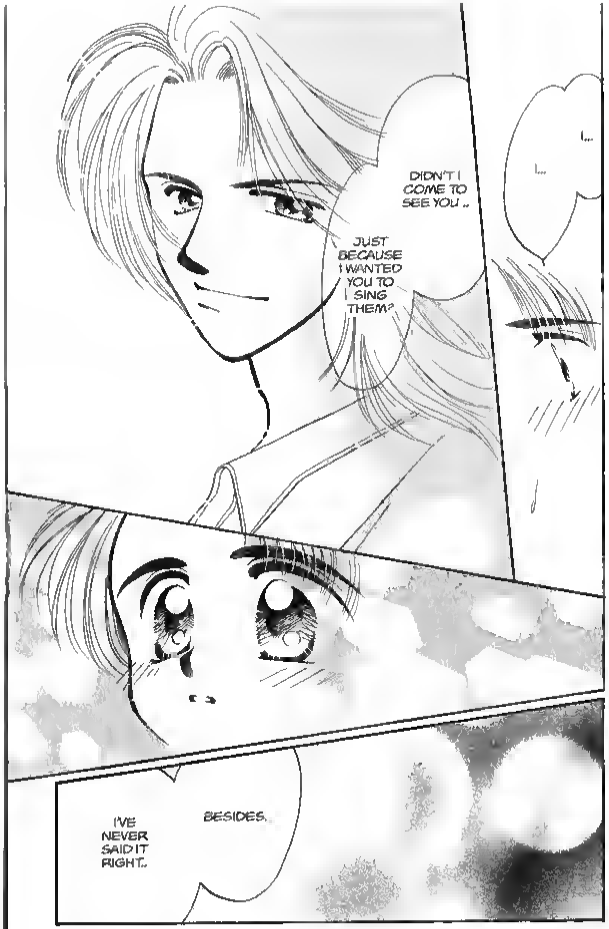

I JUST WANT TO BE GOOD ENOUGH FOR AIRI...
THAT'S WHY...

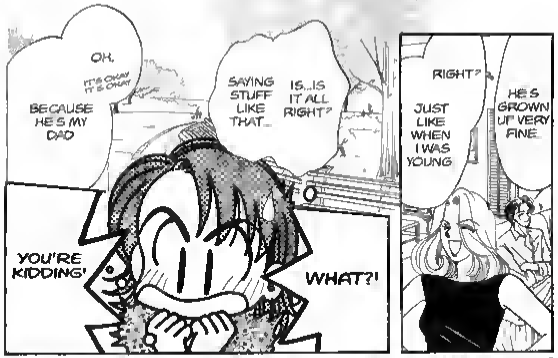

THERE'S NO MEANING IN ME COMING TO NEW YORK IF I FORGET THAT!
SOMETIMES WE HAVE TO FIGHT OUR OWN BATTLES IN ORDER TO PROTECT WHAT WE LOVE !!

DON'T BE SO UPSET.
I THINK YOU ALREADY KNOW.
PAT
THAT'S ENOUGH!! I'LL SING
BANG!

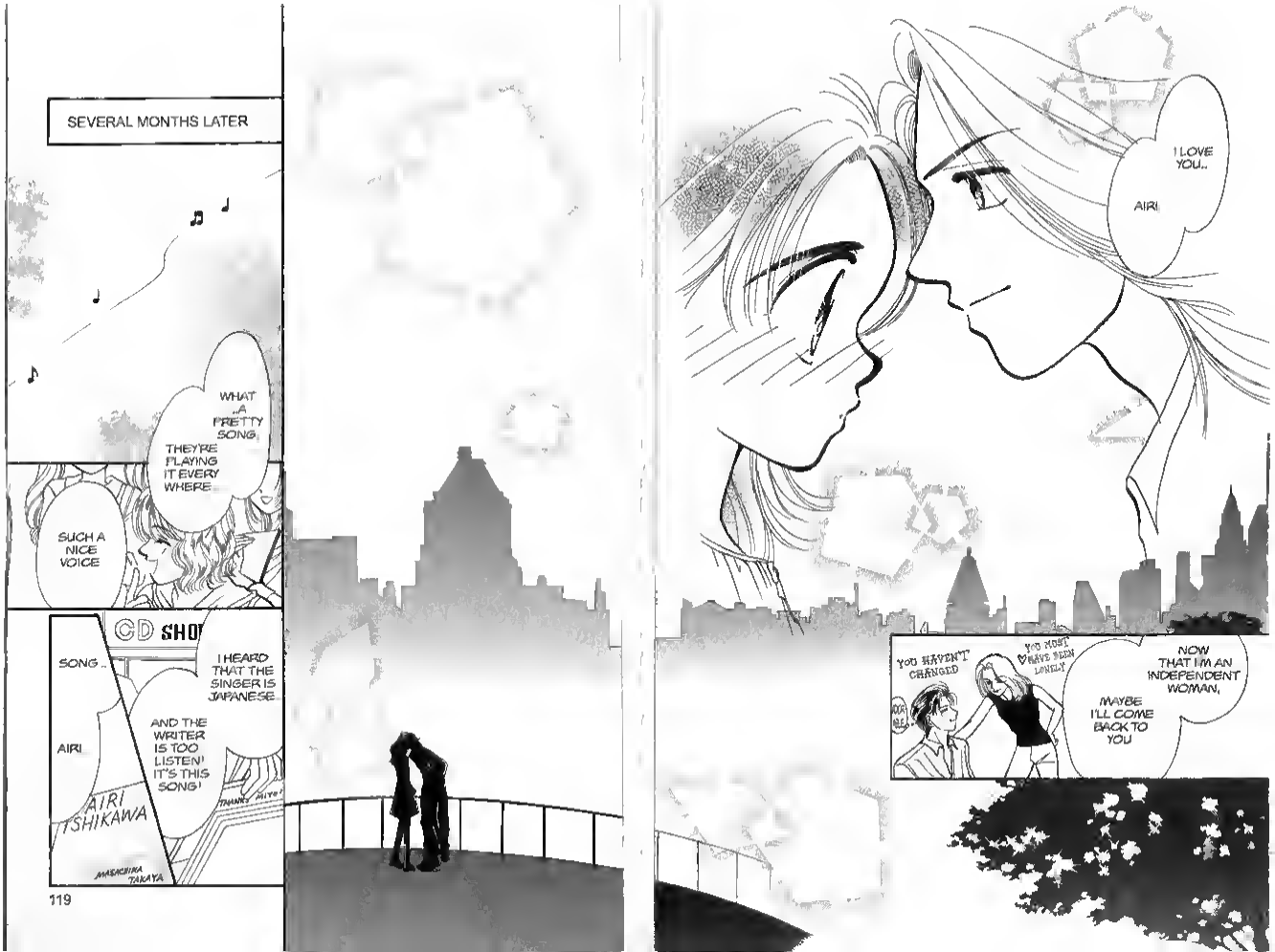

IN THE FUTURE, NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS, MY SONGS ARE FOR HER ONLY
MASACHIKA
...
FROM NOW ON... LOOKS LIKE THINGS'LL GET INTERESTING!
CLK
THE WAY YOU ARE RIGHT NOW, I'D BE TOO EMBARRASSED TO EVEN CALL YOU A RIVAL!
YOU'D BETTER WORK HARD!!
BUT...

...
YOU DON'T HAVE TO TELL ME! I'LL DO IT!
GAH!
SUCCESS ISN'T EASY TO WIN IN THIS WORLD BUT...
WORK HARD.
LET'S GO
NOW WE CAN FINALLY EASE UP AND GO ON A DATE!
WHAT?! BUT...
AIRI..
MASACHIKA
SLAM!
WAIT.
W-WAIT A SEC!
E-EXCUSE US!


I...
I...
DIDN'T I COME TO SEE YOU..
JUST BECAUSE I WANTED YOU TO I SING THEM?
BESIDES..
I'VE NEVER SAID IT RIGHT..


OH.
IT'S OKAY IT'S OKAY
BECAUSE HE'S MY DAD
SAYING STUFF LIKE THAT..
IS...IS IT ALL RIGHT?
YOU'RE KIDDING!
WHAT?!
RIGHT?
JUST LIKE WHEN I WAS YOUNG
HE'S GROWN UP VERY FINE..

FOR...ME...?!
YOU SURE IT'S ALL RIGHT?
I CAN REALLY SING YOUR SONGS..?
APPARENTLY 16 YEARS AGO, MY MOM SEPA RATED FROM DAD BECAUSE SHE WANTED TO CATCH UP TO HIM.
JUST LIKE I'M STUDYING HARD AWAY FROM YOU BECAUSE I WANT TO CATCH UP TO YOU!


SEVERAL MONTHS LATER
WHAT A PRETTY SONG.
THEY'RE PLAYING IT EVERY WHERE.
SUCH A NICE VOICE
CD SHOP
I HEARD THAT THE SINGER IS JAPANESE.
AND THE WRITER IS TOO. LISTEN! IT'S THIS SONG!
SONG..
AIRI
AIRI TSHIKAWA
MAEKAWA TAKAYA
THANKS, PEOPLE
I LOVE YOU..
AIRI
YOU HAVEN'T CHANGED
YOU MUST HAVE BEEN LONELY
NOW THAT I'M AN INDEPENDENT WOMAN,
MAYBE I'LL COME BACK TO YOU

AIRI
ISHIKAWA_!!
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This book reads from right to left.

RATED A FOR ALL AGES

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